

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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INR-07 NSAE-00 EB-08 COME-00 FAA-00 DOTE-00 SY-05

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FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5585

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR US-BH

SUBJECT: AIRPORT SECURITY

1. SIR HARRISON COURTNEY, DISTINGUISHED BELIZEAN BARRISTER, FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND A HIGHLY RESPECTED ELDER IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, CALLED AT CONGEN TODAY (APRIL 22ND) TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF HIS CLOSE FRIEND OF LONG STANDING, WAHIB J. HABET, ALSO A RESPECTED LOCAL FIGURE, WHO, ACCORDING TO SIR HARRISON, WAS ARRESTED BY AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICIALS IN NEW ORLEANS APRIL 19, WHEN A REVOLVER WAS FOUND IN A BRIEF CASE HE WAS CARRYING. HABET SAID TO HAVE BEEN RELEASED ON \$1,000 BOND.

2. SIR HARRISON EXPLAINED THAT HABET HAD HAD THE GUN WITH HIM DURING A VISIT TO A LUMBER CAMP OF WHICH HE IS OWNER AND OPERATOR AND THAT IT WAS CUSTOMARY AND EVEN ESSENTIAL TO CARRY A WEAPON IN THE REMOTE AREA IN WHICH THE CAMP IS LOCATED. ACCORDING TO SIR HARRISON, HABET WAS DISTRAUGHT OVER OLOOMY PROGNOSIS FOR HIS ONLY REMAINING SON (HIS OTHER SON HAVING RECENTLY LOST HIS LIFE IN TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCES) WHO WAS TO HAVE UNDERGONE BRAIN SURGERY THAT DAY IN THE OESCHNER HOSPITAL IN NEW ORLEANS AS A RESULT OF A MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT, AND SIMPLY FORGOT TO TAKE THE GUN OUT OF HIS BRIEFCASE.

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3. SIR HARRISON'S REQUEST TO US, PRESUMABLY RELAYING HABEL'S OWN WISHES, WAS THAT THE MATTER BE DEALT WITH AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE. HE SAID HABET FULLY APPRECIATES THE SERIOUSNESS OF HIS MISTAKE AND EXPECTS TO PAY A FINE AND LOSE HIS GUN; HOWEVER, HE HOPES TO AVOID THE MENTAL STRAIN OF A PROLONGED WAIT TO KNOW THE OUTCOME. SIR HARRISON ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE

THAT HABET BE TREATED AS COMPASSIONATELY AS POSSIBLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

4. COMMENT: THE CONSULATE GENERAL WAS ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH SOME OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES CITED BY SIR HARRISON AND BELIEVES HIS ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT. BOTH HE AND HABET ARE WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO SS. ANYTHING THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT APPROPRIATELY DO ALONG THE LINES INDICATED BY SIR HARRISON WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

5. SUBSEQUENT TO MY SIGNING OFF ON ABOVE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE DESMOND WILLOUGHBY TELEPHONED CONGEN AT REQUEST OF DEPUTY PREMIER TO PASS ALONG INFORMATION THAT HABET IS LICENSED TO CARRY REVOLVER IN BELIZE (SMITH AND WESSON .38 CALIBER, SERIAL NO. 194510). WILLOUGHBY STRESSED THAT IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR HABET TO BE IN POSSESSION OF FIREARM AND THAT HE COULD EASILY HAVE PACKED IT UNCONSCIOUSLY.
GAWF

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